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Office of Gun Violence Prevention Director Antonio Emanuel hosts a meeting between Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and V.I. Police Commissioner Ray Martinez with representatives from the National Network of Safe Communities.

Governor Bryan, Office of Gun Violence Prevention Director Meet with National Network for Safer Communities Representatives

Office of Gun Violence Prevention also held first meeting of its Advisory Council, which comprises representatives from public and private sectors across the Territory

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and Office of Gun Violence Prevention Executive Director Antonio Emanuel met with representatives from the National Network of Safe Communities (NNSC) on Tuesday, March 22, to discuss strategies to address gun violence in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The NNSC has joined in partnership with the Office of Gun Violence Prevention (OGVP) to assist in developing outreach programs to reduce gun violence by using a holistic health approach rather than the traditional strictly law enforcement action-based reactions.

The NNSC is an action research center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice that provides proven, evidence-based, life-saving violence reduction strategies to dozens of communities across America and around the world. The organization has demonstrated conclusively that within communities the overwhelming majority of residents are not dangerous and that the small number of chronic violent offenders are also at the most risk of being victimized themselves.

“The NNSC’s work has underscored the importance of the community and its power to curtail the plague of gun violence,” Governor Bryan said. “We’ve heard it many times, ‘If you see something, say something,’ and when

our residents and businesses actively participate with law enforcement, it gets the small minority of offenders off our streets."

NNSC representatives Alex Acevedo, Audrey Hatch, Meagan McDonald and Jaime Ortize-Aub participated in the discussion while in the Territory laying the groundwork for effective ways to curb gun violence with Executive Director Emanuel and the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) by reviewing gun violence incidents and analyzing the statistical information presented by VIPD.

Police Commissioner Ray Martinez, along with Assistant Commissioners Mario Brooks and Sidney Elskoe, also attended the meeting.

On March 9, the Office of Gun Violence Prevention also held the first meeting of the public sector members of its Advisory Council, which is made up of a broad swath of public- and private-sector stakeholders from throughout the Territory.



Office of Gun Violence Prevention Executive Director Antonio Emanuel (center) gives a presentation to the public sector members of the Advisory Committee during their inaugural meeting on March 9, 2022.

The OGVP is mandated by Governor Bryan's Executive Order 511-2021 to assemble and work with an advisory council that is created to assist in implementing programs and strategies to reduce violence in the Territory.

The Advisory Council is comprised of representatives from:

- The Office of the Governor
- Law Enforcement Planning Commission
- V.I. Police Department
- Bureau of Corrections
- V.I. Department of Justice
- Office of the Public Defender
- Department of Labor
- V.I. Housing Authority
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Health
- Department of Education
- University of the Virgin Islands

- V.I. National Guard
- Federal Law Enforcement Partners
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Non-profit Organizations
- Local Community Businesses

“The meeting was spirited, and energy was high as passionate conversations sparked suggestions and ideas and revealed there already are some existing programs in place. There are agencies, organizations and even individuals that are doing incredible outreach, but we are not coordinated and often times we don’t know about the programs,” Executive Director Emanuel said. “When the information is not available it is difficult to connect citizens with proper resources to assist them when they are in need.”

Executive Director Emanuel said his office is building a database to be able to readily assist agencies, and individuals by connecting them to appropriate resources.

Members of the community who are sponsoring programs, activities or events focused on reducing crime and violence can contact the Office of Gun Violence Prevention at 340-227-1049

The Office of Gun Violence Prevention was written into legislation in 2019 as Act No. 8423, and its mission is to foster community-based strategies to help prevent violence and increase public safety.

The Bryan-Roach Administration is investing in the Territory’s people, infrastructure and future through transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government and ensuring that recovery projects are completed as quickly as possible. Visit transparency.vi.gov

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